DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 451 CG 018 607

AUTHOR Solomon, Jonathan M.; Strutt, George F., Jr.
TITLE Promoting Career Awareness in Psychology through Exploring.
PUB DATE Aug 85
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (93rd, Los Angeles, CA, August 23-27, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; Career Awareness; *Career Exploration; *Experiential Learning; High Schools; Program Development; *Program Implementation; *Psychology
IDENTIFIERS *Boy Scouts of America

ABSTRACT

This paper describes a career awareness program in psychology sponsored by the Central New York Psychology Association and Hutchings Psychiatric Center, in association with the Exploring Division of the Boy Scouts of America. The Exploring program is described as a coeducational program which seeks to provide young people between the ages of 14 and 20 with career awareness opportunities in more than 100 different specialties. The Psychology Explorer Post, which has served an average of 75 high school students in each of its 3 years of operation, is presented as one area of the Explorer program which describes the work lives of psychologists and allows students to gain an understanding of the field of psychology, its educational requirements, and its occupational opportunities. The steps taken by sponsoring professional groups in creating and running their own post programs are outlined. Basic principles of the Psychology Post are explained and problems encountered in implementing the program are discussed. Monthly meetings of the Psychology Post are reviewed which usually involve presentations by practicing psychologists in their respective areas of expertise followed by small group discussions. The establishment of two research groups, one involved in survey research and the other involved in conducting an experiment, are described as optional activities for members. The benefits to Post members and to sponsoring organizations are described and colleagues are encouraged to establish similar groups in their communities. (Author/NRB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED263451

Promoting career awareness in psychology through Exploring

Jonathan M. Solomon, Ph.D., and George F. Strutt, Jr., Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This paper describes in detail a career awareness program in psychology sponsored by the Central New York Psychological Association and Hutchings Psychiatric Center, in association with the Exploring Division of the Boy Scouts of America. Coeducational and operating on a small budget, the Explorer Post has served an average of 75 high school students in each of its three years of operation. The goal of the program is to allow participants to gain an understanding of the field of psychology, its educational requirements, occupational opportunities, and to describe the work lives of psychologists.

Monthly meetings usually involve presentations by practicing psychologists in their respective areas of expertise followed by small discussion groups. The benefits to post members and sponsoring organizations are described and colleagues are encouraged to establish similar groups in their communities.

CG018607

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jonathan M. Solomon

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Promoting career awareness in psychology through Exploring

Jonathan M. Solomon, Ph.D., and George F. Strutt, Jr., Ph.D.

High school students taking courses in psychology frequently do not develop a clear understanding of the requirements and potential opportunities of the field. Secondary school teachers, faced with the tremendous breadth of psychology subject matter, often emphasize fundamental information, leaving little time for vocational issues. Furthermore, most instruction is based on textbook material with limited opportunity for interaction with practicing psychologists. The result is that students interested in careers in psychology pursue this goal with almost no clear knowledge of educational needs, different occupations within the field, or work lives of professional psychologists.

At the same time, many psychology organizations--universities, hospitals, private practices, regional and state associations, and other psychology groups--frequently seek to reach out to the community.

Linking psychology organizations to secondary schools has advantages for all concerned. While students receive additional information about psychology, the sponsoring organization performs a public service and establishes a higher profile in the community. What is difficult is finding a way to initiate contact between psychology groups and students. One very effective means of access is furnished through the Exploring program of the Boy Scouts of America.

In this paper, we describe in detail a Psychology Explorer Post co-sponsored by the Central New York Psychological Association (CNYPA), an affiliate of the New York State Psychological Association and the American Psychological Association; and Hutchings Psychiatric Center, a state psychiatric hospital in Syracuse, New York. An average of 75 high school students have joined the Explorer Post in each of its three years of operation. At the end of its first year, the Post received the Best New Post of the Year award for the Central New York region. The region's highest honor, Best Post Program, was awarded to the Post after the second year of operation. It is the contention of the authors that similar successes could be achieved by psychologists in other regions of the country.

The Exploring program is coeducational and seeks to provide young people ages fourteen to twenty with career awareness opportunities in more than 100 different specialties ranging from accounting to zoology. The Exploring organization supplies information on how to organize and maintain a successful program. It also provides training for adult and student leaders, liability insurance, a forum for contact with other post programs, and the names of potential post members. Further information about Exploring is available in a fact sheet entitled "What is Exploring?" distributed by the Scouting organization (Boy Scouts of America, 1985). It should be noted that uniforms, badges, ranks, and all the other well-known features of the Boy Scouts at the lower age levels are not part of the career awareness Explorer program. Each Explorer post focuses on a particular

career. Each sponsoring professional group creates and runs its own post program.

Each spring, the Explorer organization nationwide conducts career interest surveys in high schools, and then uses these data to organize posts. When the Exploring organization initially approached CNYPA about sponsoring a post, it came with the names, addresses, and phone numbers of over a thousand Syracuse-area teenagers interested in a career in psychology.

The sponsoring organization then sent a letter to prospective post members and their families which invited them to an introductory meeting, at which the field of psychology was discussed and the upcoming post program was described. Those who wished to join paid a nominal registration fee, which is divided between the Explorer organization and the post; we have run our program on less than $250 each year.

The Post program itself was planned by: 1) an advisory committee from the sponsoring organizations; 2) the four adult advisors of the Post, who attend each meeting; and 3) after our first year, the three student officers of the Post (the President, Vice-President, and Secretary). The advisors include a clinical psychologist, a school psychologist, and two psychology graduate students. We have found that the graduate students and student leaders have added significantly to the rapport and enthusiasm within the Post.

The meetings, which run for an hour and 45 minutes, are divided into two sections. First, an invited guest psychologist

speaks for 50 minutes on a pre-selected topic. The group then splits into four smaller discussion groups, each led by one of the adult advisors. During the latter section, the invited speaker moves form group to group, allowing for informal discussion. The members, who come from many different schools, have found the small groups an excellent vehicle for enhancing social interaction. This is fostered by the inclusion of group dynamics activities conducted by the advisor. Furthermore, groups are formed based on member birthdates (with the year broken up into quarters). This forces post members to make new acquaintances while infusing a sense of community in the group. In the last fifteen minutes of the evening's program, the large group reconvenes and the different ideas and comments of the discussion groups are shared.

In this, the third year of the Post, an additional experience has been offered. Past Post members had requested experiential opportunities and more meetings. These requests have been accomodated by establishing two research groups. One of these groups is involved in survey research while the other conducts an experiment. Participation in either or both groups is optional and is designed for those with an intense interest in the field. These individuals learn about research methods, ethical concerns, and areas of study. Approximately one-fourth of the Post's members elected to participate in the research module.

The development of our program has been guided by two

principles. First, the members have had significant input in the choice of topics, even at the expense of covering the breadth of the field. Second, we have attempted to avoid a lecture format similar to their school experience. The guest speakers have used an activity-oriented approach which has added an experiential component to the learning. For example, a program devoted to family therapy centered around a role play with some Post members acting as the family and the presenter serving as thee therapist. Topics of other presentations include college and graduate school requirements, biofeedback, psychological research, adolescence, psychological testing, dream analysis, eating disorders, and forensic psychology. Speakers have been asked to talk about their backgrounds, interests and job experiences. As part of our Post program, Explorers have toured a local psychiatric hospital and, with parent permission, participated as subjects in a pilot research study.

Some problems are encountered when such an endeavor is undertaken. Most of these occurred during the early stages of establishing the Post. They have included finding a meeting place, devising a program format, working without student leaders until elections could be held, and creating a system for the routine dissemination of publicity material. A difficulty that could be encountered in such a program could be the location of speakers that are knowledgable about particular subject areas. Based on the nature of the group, the speakers must also be able to find a balance between being informative

at a relatively advanced level and being entertaining enough to maintain their interest and attention. This has not been a concern in our situation as the CNYPA organization provides us with a substantial pool of member resources.

Another problem is that Post members drop out of the program as their schedules fill or they learn that psychology does not meet their needs and expectations. However, even with the latter students, we feel we have provided a service by narrowing their career decisons.

The benefits of conducting such a program clearly outweigh the costs and difficulties. These benefits are not restricted to the "recipients" of the program, the Post members. Sponsoring organizations provide community service while enhancing their profile in the public domain. Establishing student contact with the sponsoring organization can be a valuable outcome. This would be particularly true for colleges seeking new student recruitment tools. Finally, the profession of psychology benefits by having future psychologists better prepared for entry into the field.

In sum, we view psychologists as uniquely qualified to conduct a career awareness program such as the one we have described. The psychologist's knowledge of group dynamics, learning, and the behavior and interests of adolescents significantly contribute to the potential for success. The Exploring organization has proven supportive, without being intrusive; we have enjoyed our association with them. The experience has

been valuable for all involved and we strongly encourage our colleagues to establish similar groups in their communities.

REFERENCE

Fact sheet. (1985, May). What is Exploring? (Available from Communications, Boy Scouts of America, 1325 Walnut Hill Lane, Irving, Texas 75038-3096)